



EPA officials schedule visit for Tuesday, July 23

Several regional and national Environmental Protection Agency officials will visit Libby Tuesday, July 23, to review EPA activities in the area and meet with community leaders.

New EPA Region 8 administrator Robbie Roberts is scheduled to visit Libby along with Marianne Horinko, EPA assistant administrator for solid waste and emergency response; Horinko's deputy Jeff Denit; John Wardell of the EPA's Helena office; and Jan Sensabaugh, director of the state Department of Environmental Quality.

Roberts takes over for deputy administrator Jack McGraw, who has overseen the region since shortly after the Libby problem was identified in late 1999.

Aubrey Miller and Hugh Sloan of the U.S. Public Health Service may also participate in the visit, and U.S. Senators Max Baucus and Conrad Burns and Rep. Denny Rehberg have been invited.

The group is scheduled to tour cleanup sites and the Center for Asbestos Related Disease after lunch, then meet with Libby City Council and the Lincoln County Commissioners at

Libby City Hall from 4 to 5 p.m. and Community Advisory Group members from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Ponderosa Room at Libby City Hall.

As of July 13 the EPA has surveyed 973 properties with 202 properties having vermiculite insulation or other indoor sources and 331 properties having visible vermiculite outdoors, such as in garden areas.

The EPA expects to complete the survey of Libby area properties in the fall. The agency is also collecting soil samples at all properties where consent has been granted. Results of the soil tests are expected in about a month.

EPA director Christy Todd Whitman gave the go-ahead this spring for cleanup of Zonolite insulation from Libby area buildings. Whitman based her decision on the extensive exposure Libby community members have had in the past to the asbestos-tainted vermiculite.

W.R. Grace mined and processed the vermiculite in the Libby area. Material was made available for local residents to insulate their homes and businesses, as well as add as a soil conditioner in gardens.

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